

EMAN ADVANCED COHORT

CFLeads Economic Mobility Action Network Case Study

Building a new legacy in North Texas

It finally happened in 2024: Fort Worth, TX, surpassed Austin, TX, in size, becoming the nation's 11th largest city—and one of the few in the U.S. to cross the 1 million population mark. Including surrounding Tarrant County, the region now boasts over 2 million people.

The area's population boom over the past few decades has not come without growing pains, yet leaders here are committed to not letting their story be "a tale of two cities." They understand the urgent need to ensure North Texas is one thriving region—with opportunity for everyone.

They've set their sights on creating affordable housing options, helping students and families gain pathways to college and careers, strengthening nonprofits that tackle poverty, and nurturing vibrant neighborhoods with a strong sense of community in ZIP codes with the greatest need.

Led by [North Texas Community Foundation](#), Fort Worth and Tarrant County were part of [CFLeads](#)' Economic Mobility Action Network (EMAN) Advanced Cohort in 2024–2025.

**NORTH TEXAS
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

CFLeads

Community Foundations
Leading Change



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION:

North Texas Community Foundation

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES USED:

Engaging residents, working across sectors, shaping public policy

SUMMARY:

Leaders in North Texas are working hard to ensure Fort Worth and surrounding Tarrant County are one thriving region—with opportunity for everyone.



“Community prosperity isn’t going to come only from community foundations and other philanthropies writing checks. We’ve got to grow it. We’re committed to providing resources to people in communities to help them develop the neighborhoods where they live.”

Rose Bradshaw
President and CEO
North Texas Community Foundation

The Vision

“I envision a future in which people throughout our region have the right to age in place, strong education systems, and affordable housing where they want to live, and where small businesses can stay knowing the city and county will invest in them,” says Whitnee Boyd, North Texas Community Foundation’s Director of Community Impact.

The Strategy

North Texas Community Foundation has made a 10-year commitment to equitable regional development in communities throughout Fort Worth and North Texas, with targeted investments in neighborhoods that have previously been under resourced.

The EMAN Challenge

Going into the EMAN Advanced Cohort, The North Texas team wanted to build a plan to advance policy, advocacy, and programs that support economic mobility—one that could be tested in two neighborhoods and replicated in other parts of the city and county. Ultimately, they wanted to enable residents to stay where they live, grow their businesses, have access to jobs, and benefit from generational wealth building—while also retaining the unique culture and history of their neighborhoods.

How North Texas Community Foundation Is Leveraging a Community Leadership Approach

North Texas Community Foundation is **engaging residents** with the help of, and by providing funding to, nonprofits with deep roots in communities. The Foundation is working directly with community quarterbacks who are helping to guide place-based plans to improve community vitality. Residents also serve on the Foundation’s grants committee, helping decide which organizations to fund.

The Foundation is **working across sectors**, aided by its participation in the EMAN Advanced Cohort. Its EMAN team included leaders from city government, the Foundation’s board, local nonprofits, and a private foundation—partnerships that opened doors to collaborative efforts and early policy conversations.

EMAN also gave the Foundation a better understanding of the role it can play in **shaping public policy**. In 2025, the Foundation’s Board of Directors tasked staff with developing a legislative agenda and meeting with local, state, and federal policymakers to share its perspective on issues that will advance economic mobility in North Texas.

“Learning alongside the doers, supporters, and funders of this work in North Texas has been a tremendous help,” Boyd says. “It gave community leaders and nonprofit leaders a sense of agency so they felt comfortable sharing creative ways municipalities and philanthropy can walk beside them to remove barriers to success.”



CONSIDER THIS:

What can you do to help leaders from different sectors of your community learn together and learn from other communities?

The Partners

Important partners in the work in North Texas include:

- [City of Fort Worth](#)
- Rainwater Charitable Fund
- BRAVE/R Together
- [Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce](#)
- Grantees and donors of the North Texas Community Foundation’s [Beacon Fund](#)

The Journey

Participating in the EMAN Advanced Cohort helped the Foundation and its partners evolve their thinking. They initially planned to advance economic mobility one neighborhood at a time. Now, they want to catalyze the grassroots work that has long been happening across Fort Worth.

“We were hearing from grantees that they needed operating dollars to support neighborhoods where they’d been working for years,” Boyd says.

In February 2025, the Foundation gave \$250,000 to BRAVE/R Together, a nonprofit that acts as a community quarterback, convening stakeholders and empowering residents to ensure that culture, commerce, and community thrive in Fort Worth’s Historic Southside. And with coaching from their EMAN peers and funding from a legacy gift, the North Texas team developed and got board approval for a new fund called BEACON, or Building Economic Access, Community, Opportunity & Networks. It provides operating support to nonprofits in historically disinvested neighborhoods. The Foundation distributed nearly \$600,000 to 22 organizations in the first cycle, in June 2025. Most recently in February 2026, the Foundation gave \$250,000 to the Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which acts as a community quarterback and focuses on revitalizing the commercial and residential corridors in the Historic Northside District of Fort Worth.

“EMAN helped us think about creating an activated network of grantees,” says Rose Bradshaw, North Texas Community Foundation’s President and CEO. “Granting organizations money is good, but it’s not enough. Many leaders in our communities have not had access to corridors of power. We want to make sure those doors are open to them.”

Wins So Far

- Having a board member participate in the EMAN cohort alongside Foundation staff was a big win, Bradshaw says. “To have a board member who is a champion now and believes our economic mobility strategy is the way to go gets us a long way.”
- In fall 2025, the North Texas team extended the learning journey beyond the people who had participated in the EMAN Advanced Cohort. They brought a Fort Worth delegation to Milwaukee to learn about the success of Thrive On, which was driven by the Greater Milwaukee Community Foundation. The team then brought community development experts from nonprofit investor Local Initiatives Support Corporation to Fort Worth to meet neighborhood leaders, the Fort Worth city manager, and private foundation staff.
- In fall 2025, the Foundation hosted more than 50 fundholders, private foundations, and corporate grantmakers on a half-day bus tour that shared neighborhood history and introduced investors to local leaders driving positive change in the community.

“As one of the fastest growing cities in the country, there’s a lot of pressure from new development. We’re asking, ‘How do we protect culture, commerce, and community in historic and legacy neighborhoods?’”

Whitnee Boyd

*Edd, Director of Community Impact
North Texas Community Foundation*

What’s Next

- By 2030, the Foundation aims to have at least three community quarterback organizations working alongside philanthropic institutions, city partners, other nonprofit leaders, and the business community to nurture the vitality of Fort Worth neighborhoods.
- Building on lessons learned from EMAN, the Foundation has launched a cohort for BEACON grantees. The experience will strengthen their capacity for effective community development, employ peer coaching methods modeled after EMAN, and provide technical assistance from national organizations such as EMAN consultant FSG, experts in systems change.



CONSIDER THIS:

In addition to making grants, what are three things you can do to increase community members’ ability to help advance economic mobility and community development?

Why Economic Mobility Matters



No matter where you live or what background you come from, we all want—and deserve—to build a better future for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors.

But not everyone in every community has the same access to quality education, good life-sustaining jobs, housing they can afford in the places they want to live, a safe environment, and civic participation and justice.

“True economic mobility comes when communities work together to remove barriers and create pathways for people to succeed. The EMAN community foundations and their partners are showing how local leadership, collaboration, and trust can create lasting change for everyone.”

Mary L. Thomas
President and CEO, CFLeads

CFLeads utilizes [Urban Institute’s three-part definition](#) and defines economic mobility as the ability of people to improve their economic status, have power and autonomy over their lives, and be engaged in and valued by their community.

To communities, economic mobility means that people are able to put food on the table and have more time to spend with their kids or doing things they love. It means kids have good education options, and adults can build generational wealth through buying a home, leave a legacy, and retire comfortably. It means people feel at home in their community, can find good jobs there, and have the power to shape a brighter future for everyone who lives there.

Economic mobility means people have enough, however they define it.

CFLeads Economic Mobility Action Network (EMAN)

Community foundations catalyze change and are trusted place-based partners who work across the nonprofit, public, and private sectors to create thriving communities where all people can prosper.

In that spirit, from September 2024 to October 2025, CFLeads brought together 19 communities to learn from each other as they worked to boost economic mobility over the long term.

The 19 community foundations represented in EMAN are leading the way toward economic mobility by engaging residents, sharing data, working across sectors, marshalling resources, and shaping public policy.

How will YOU advance economic mobility in your community?

Start your journey by learning more about [CFLeads’ work on this issue](#) and exploring economic mobility resources from Urban Institute, Results for America, and Opportunity Insights.